



CASE STUDY: OVERCOMING A PANDEMIC (AND NIMBYS)

HUSHfm & THE BAYSHORE CONCERT SERIES

BACKGROUND: THE COVID PANDEMIC SHUTS DOWN THE TOURING BIZ

All of us recall the feelings of fear and helplessness that swept the world in the spring of 2020. Businesses shuttered, travel curtailed, and eventually a complete lockdown in our homes. Although some elements of the economy were faster to recover, the live event industry faced an existential crisis. Without safe public gathering, there could be no live events, and without live events, there could be no live event *industry*.

THE CHALLENGE OF COVID-ERA EVENTS

Although HUSHconcerts has long been North America's most technically and operationally adept wireless headphone producer, the challenge of Covid events exceeded even our experience. While one idea might be to use headphones to aid in social distancing, until more later research was revealed into the nature of the virus, we could not know for certain how to safely sanitize the kit between uses. Eventually our shop acquired a high end sanitization regime including chemical and UV technology, but the challenges of public gathering remained. For instance, even if we could feel confident of producing a safe event, local municipalities were slow to develop regulations & guidelines under which such events would be approved.

Naturally, attention turned to the use of FM radio to transmit to attendees socially distanced in their vehicles. The short, strange era of 'drive in concerts' had begun, but in reality, no one knew how to produce them. Our experience with wireless events had us fielding calls from all over the country, and while our headphones worked well as receivers, most partners were looking specifically for FM broadcasts direct to car stereos. Unlike the Part 74 frequencies that HUSH (and anyone who operates wireless mikes) is licensed to use, FM is a highly regulated, expensive space in which to operate. Most cities have almost no open space to broadcast and the folks who own the radio stations pay dearly for this right.

To produce pop up events in this environment would be not only a technical challenge, but a legal one as well. The crux of which was as follows: how to find broadcast on FM within FCC guidelines while finding enough distance to make a drive-in economically viable. Small 'church transmitters' could hit 30-50 cars for instance, but getting 100, 200, 500 cars was necessary to make drive-in performances something worth the economic risk. So how do you create enough range when the FCC guidelines restrict power output. Furthermore, one must understand that knowingly violating FCC guidelines is serious business. FCC fines are in the six-figure range, and AAA radio stations are famously litigious. To pull this off, one must tread respectfully through this RF minefield.

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FIRST STEPS - J.SERRA HIGH

Our first foray into this maelstrom of need and restriction was an inquiry from the brilliant team at Legendary Entertainment in Southern California who would be producing a graduation event for J.SERRA HIGH in San Juan Capistrano that May. Our first call was to bring in event audio ninja William Nealie, a veteran of three decades of technical mastery in the touring and installation world. Will helped us source vintage equipment that made this 400 car high school graduation a huge success just three months into lockdown. Mr. Nealie's radio expertise combined with HUSH's operational prowess, and (event producer) Legendary Entertainment's adept use of largescreen LED made the event a smashing success.



THE BIRTH of HUSHfm

With the product proven, we launched our new line 'HUSHfm' in the summer of 2020. Within days of ringing the bell, we were receiving enquiries from across the country from universities, high schools, and touring producers. But our biggest success would come closer to home, in sleepy Burlingame California. Nestled next to San Francisco's SFO airport, the tight-knit community of Burlingame serves as a safe haven for families who commute to both San Francisco and Silicon Valley. The Burlingame Recreation & Park department is among the more

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progressive and courageous we have dealt with and they contacted us to help produce drive in movies for them starting that July of 2020. On July 25, 2020, our first foray into Burlingame was a a flawless success, with 50 families enjoying a beautiful evening on the manicured lawn of the Burlingame Golf Center (Driving Range). With the beautiful views and expansive space that this driving range allowed us, it didn't take much imagination to dream a bigger dream.

FALL 2020 - THE BAYSHORE CONCERT SERIES

While our work with the City of Burlingame at the Burlingame Golf Center had given us an ideal venue for drive-in events, other challenges remained. Unlike traditional theater/club touring, doing drive-in events presents additional challenges. For instance, if the event is outdoors, can a band use loudspeakers? Monitors? How will they hear each other? Will attendees be allowed out of cars? What about food and beverage sales? Merchandise? And finally, what acts would even want to leave the relative safety of their homes & studios to do events like these?



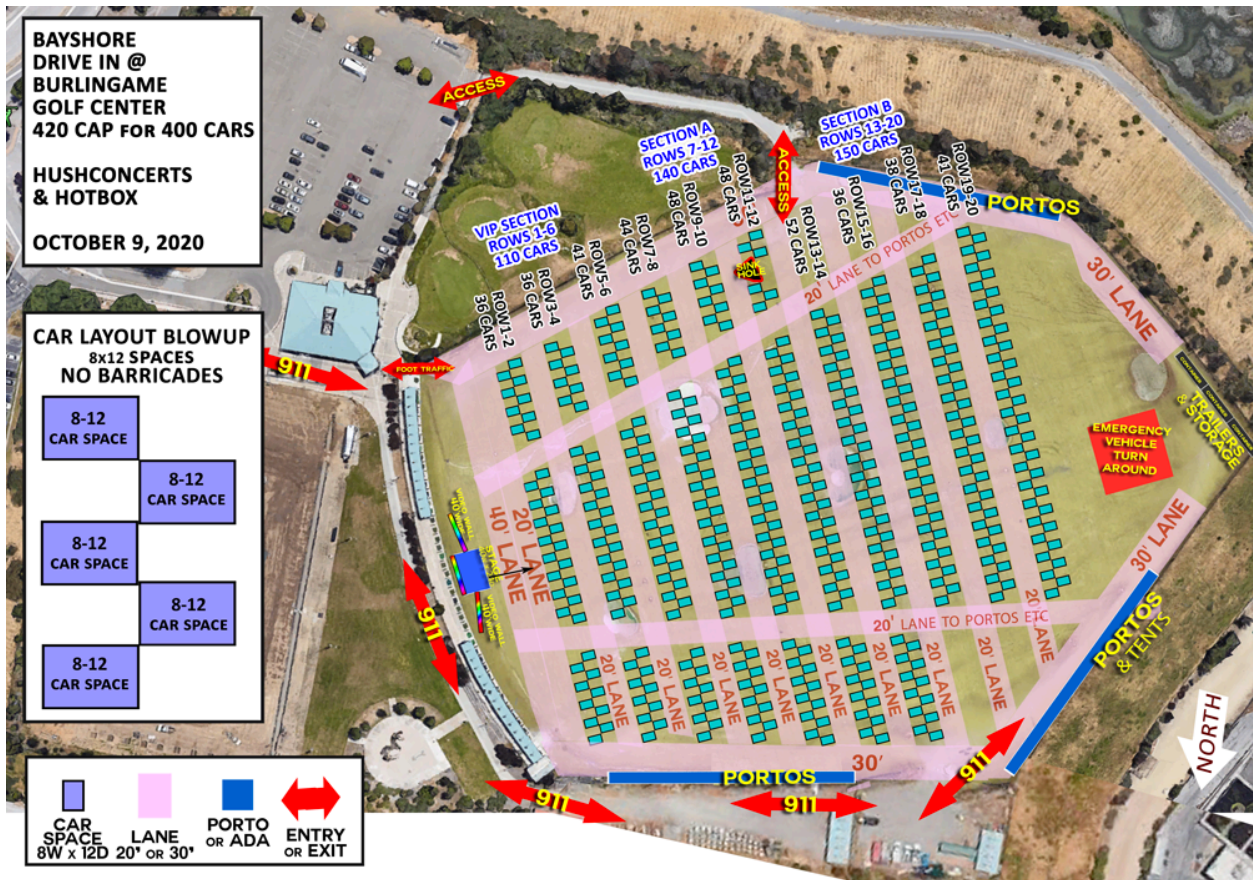
Pandemic Rules - Photo Credit - MamaLayla LLC

Enter HOTBOX. Thankfully, HUSHconcerts has had a long, fruitful relationship with Noah Dials of DJ Dials Presents, and his partner, marketing wiz, Matt Feldberg, who were pioneering the drive-in experience that summer. After discussing the site with Hotbox, their team got to work with ours building a concert series lineup that would put event professionals back to work in the Fall of 2020.

FM CHALLENGES

However, one major technical challenge remained - the FM broadcast itself. Since Burlingame Golf Center is less than a mile from the radio maelstrom of SFO Airport, and right smack between AAA radio stations in San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose, finding an open frequency would be a huge challenge. Furthermore, how were we to fill a field for 500 cars when our

output restrictions kept our power so low that only 50-75 could be reached with one transmitter?



To this challenge, HUSH applied a hybrid RF solution. We created a distributed network of FM transmitters (all within the strict FCC guideline) but chained them together (wirelessly) using out exclusive Silent Conference transmitters & receivers. Put simply, the music/film etc would flow from the performer, to a soundboard (like every concert) , then to one of our PART 74, medium range Silent Conference Falcon transmitters. Around the grass, we placed several of our receivers, which would take in the signal, then chain it out to small (legal) FM transmitters. This we could fill the entire area with FM radio without exceeding the legal limit, and keeping our broadcast restricted entirely within our event site. During a sound test, we even drove around the area, less than 100 yards from the field, and the broadcast was inaudible, while within our area, it was pristine.

THE SERIES IS LAUNCHED

With the expert curatorial experience of the team from Hotbox and HUSHconcerts, it didn't take long to book and announce a truly epic lineup. The series would kick off Thursday October 22, 2020 with multi-instrumental genius THUNDERCAT, followed that weekend by shows with Dirtybird Records star producer SHIBA SAN, two huge shows with multiple Grammy Award

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winner DIPLO and MAJOR LAZER and a sunday afternoon foray into swing with vintage big bame revivalists PINK MARTINI. The second weekend would host party community RNB ONLY, then two shows with superstar MARC REBILLET. Weekend three boasted central valley EDM superstar DEORRO and two shows with international comedy heavyweight BERT KREISCHER. Sales for the series were strong, as were the questions we fielded regarding operations, entry, and safety. With all of that solved, it was a bit surprising that our biggest challenge came from an older avenue: SOUND BLEED.

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HOTBOX & HUSHCONCERTS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH NOISE POP, DO THE BAY & SIERRA NEVADA, PRESENT

BAYSHORE *Drive-In*

at Burlingame Golf Center

THURSDAY OCTOBER 22

THUNDERCAT

WITH DJ UMAMI

FRIDAY OCTOBER 23

SHIBA SAN & J.PHLIP

SATURDAY OCTOBER 24

MAJOR LAZER

SUNDAY OCTOBER 25
NOISE POP PRESENTS

PINK MARTINI

THURSDAY OCTOBER 29

COLORS WORLDWIDE PRESENTS

RNB ONLY

FRIDAY OCTOBER 30

CITY OF BURLINGAME PRESENTS

HOOK

SATURDAY OCTOBER 31

MARC REBILLET

WITH HOTBOX SOUNDSYSTEM

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 1

MARC REBILLET

WITH MOTION POTION

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 8

MIDNITE EVENTS & EYE HEART PRESENT

DEORRO

WITH HENRY FONG

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 9

BERT KREISCHER

WITH DAVE WILLIAMSON & STEVE FUREY

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE RESIDENTS & OFFICIALS OF THE CITY OF BURLINGAME
BURLINGAME GOLF CENTER, STAGEGUN, E.S.S., GABRIEL & DANIEL'S, 1690 COLLECTIVE
CSC SECURITY, THIRD EAR, TRICALIFORNIA, A2Z EVENT SERVICES
CRESCO, GIGAGRAFIX & ALL THOSE WHO WORKED TIRELESSLY ON THIS EVENT.



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After 2 weeks of prep work, the stage was set, sound and lights hung, parking team trained, concessions ready and a myriad of safety and permitting hoops had been hurdled. We were back to the old familiar feeling of anticipation before a great artist plays their first note. That note, from Thundercat began an uncomfortable but familiar process that almost shut down the entire event.



Build it Up - Photo Credit - MamaLayla LLC

Even though this event would be broadcast to the car stereos via our FM receiver, the artists on stage needed monitor loudspeakers to hear themselves play. And though said monitors were tuned only to be heard near the stage, with the Bay Area so quiet during the lockdown, even this sound carried far away to the residents of Burlingame. Our phones started blowing up thirty minutes into the show. While Thundercat played brilliantly and hundreds of Bay Area residents enjoyed their first live music in many dark months, the clouds of NIMBYism were gathering.



Thundercat - Photo Credit - MamaLayla LLC

HOW TO DEAL WITH NIMBYS - RESPECT

By the morning after the first show, the Burlingame Police Dept, Rec & Park Dept, Town Manager, and every member of the Board had received calls. In all there were dozens. These public officials, who had been so supportive of the project, now faced the consequences of their bravery and decency. A board meeting was convened at which a vote to revoke our permit was narrowly averted but replaced with a demand that we make the entire event 100% silent.

Now we could have pushed back perhaps. Argued that due to the pandemic, some of these restrictions shouldn't apply to such an important engine of support for out of work concert industry professionals. We also could have pointed out that we stopped exactly at 10PM and that we had only used monitors. We could have pointed out that the thousands who would attend the series were far more important than the dozen or so who had called in. In short, we could have responded with the *facts* and then *they* would have responded to the raw emotion of their constituents, and *shut down the show*.

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Our Fans - Photo Credit - MamaLayla LLC

Instead, as HUSH has played this game with various neighbor groups in the past 25 years, from North Beach Jazz to Sea of Dreams, to All Shook Down, to Foggfest etc we did what we always do: RESPECT. There are many ways to play the NIMBY game. With North Beach Jazz, we fought a protracted existential battle against the Telegraph Hill Dwellers Neighborhood Association, and their proxy Toadies in City Govt. We turned into a front in the ongoing proxy war between the local supervisor and Mayor Gavin Newsom himself. We won the battle, but eventually lost the war as the event folded due to rising permit fees.

In subsequent run-ins we learned that many of the folks who complain simply want to be *heard*. If you take the time to contact them, engage with them, and hear them out, they typically show your event a greater degree of leniency. This was the path we chose in Burlingame.

First, we promised the Board that we would use in-ear monitors moving forward on stage. This would take care of sound moving forward. But even with this solved, sometimes people will find other reasons to complain 'traffic' 'trash' 'nuisance' etc....

So we asked for the email addresses or direct #s of everyone who had a complaint. We emailed or called every single one of them, apologizing for their distress. We explained not only what we were going to do differently with the sound, but what we were trying to accomplish with the concert, and why it could only really work, there, in this nontraditional setting. We mentioned that we were producing a free event for the Rec & Park Department the next week and that if

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they came, they should come meet us in person.

It worked. Every single person was thrilled that we cared. They were supportive of the series in general, but felt that the noise was too much to bear in their quiet community.

With the NIMBY's mollified, the production perfected after night one, we could get back to pulling off our impossible mission: TO PRODUCE AN EPIC CONCERT SERIES SAFELY IN THE MIDST OF A PANDEMIC.

CONCLUSION

Now we don't need to go into too much detail about 'how it went'. If you were there, you know. It was an absolute BLAST. Highlights included massive sold out dance music performances by DIPLO & MAJOR LAZER, SHIBA SAN, and D'EOROO. Mix in a beautiful set of afternoon jazz by PINK MARTINI and the City of Burlingame's gorgeous free movie night (which we produced pro-bono).



Pink Martini - Photo Credit - MamaLayla LLC

On the second Saturday and final Sunday we presented two shows with two of the biggest stars of the pandemic era, Youtube sensation instrumentalpatient MARC REBILLET and superstar comedia BERT 'THH MACHINE' KRIESCHER. These two nights, featuring two artists, who more than any others had defined the bravery it took to tour and perform during that scary time,

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epitomized everything we were trying to accomplish. It had all been a success. Beautiful nights, with happy people, expertly curated and produced. Mission Accomplished.



Major Lazer - Photo Credit - MamaLayla LLC

About three hours after everyone left on that final Sunday, a freak October rainstorm blew in and pounded our stage, wrecking some of the LED wall. Had this hit even hours earlier, we would have faced disaster. Sometimes, when you really think about it, it's clear that someone or something was looking out for you.



Major Lazer - Photo Credit - Casey Flanigan

Whether one believes in such notions. It's clear that WE were LOOKING OUT for YOU. HUSHconcerts & Hotbox had assembled a brilliant team during a difficult time, curated a spectacular lineup, built a venue from scratch, overcame endless technical, operational, and neighbor challenges, and PULLED IT OFF.

What we took from the experience was the confidence that *nothing* could stop us. If a global pandemic, or the rest of these challenges could not keep our team from succeeding, then we could make it through the rest of the pandemic, and thrive. And we have.